

Report says Lab's water presents no health hazard

By MARY BETH MURRILL

A federally mandated public health assessment of JPL has found that groundwater at the Laboratory does not present a past, present or future public health hazard.

The public health assessment was prepared by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), a public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and will be available for public review and comment by Aug. 21 at the Pasadena Central Library, La Cañada-Flintridge Library, Altadena Library and the JPL Library.

ATSDR is responsible for evaluating possible human health effects that can occur when people are exposed to certain hazardous chemical or hazardous wastes. The agency reviewed environmental and health-related information about JPL's site.

The site is known to have been contaminated in the past due to past chemical waste disposal practices and is now listed on the National Priorities List, which includes facilities throughout the United States known to have environmental contamination. ATSDR is responsible for evaluating all such sites for possible human health effects that may occur if people are exposed to environmental contamination.

The ATSDR reported that groundwater at JPL does not represent a public health hazard because groundwater has never been used for drinking and there are no plans to use this groundwater in the future.

In addition, the ATSDR report includes findings that:

- Perchlorate contamination (a by-product from burned rocket fuel) in off-site groundwater presents no apparent present or future public health hazard. Current sampling and blending procedures by the drinking water suppliers are expected to prevent any potential present or future public health hazards posed by perchlorate in groundwater.

- Past exposures to perchlorate contamination present an indeterminate public health hazard because there are no data on perchlorate levels before 1997.

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- No public health hazards are associated with exposure to contaminated soils at JPL.

The ATSDR report is available for public review and comment through Sept. 9. Comments will become part of the public record and will be addressed and included in the assessment, although the names of those commenting will not be included.

For information about the JPL site, the public health assessment or to receive a copy of the assessment, contact the ATSDR's toll-free number at (800) 447-1544, refer to the JPL site, and leave the name, address and telephone number of the person to whom the report should be mailed, or ask for health assessor W. Mark Weber or community involvement representative Linda West. Callers may also contact ATSDR's regional representative, Dan Strausbaug, in San Francisco at (415) 744-1774. □